Chapter 2:
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2.0 INTRODUCTION

The proposed action must assure that RCA complies with minimum FAA design standards for runway to taxiway separation and runway length for small aircraft forecast to use the airport during the next twenty years. This project will require the relocation and lengthening of a new runway 16-34; expansion of aprons, taxiways; acquisition of 132.0 acres of land; and development of hangar areas to accommodate current and future growth. Alternative 4 satisfies these requirements and has been selected as the preferred alternative and proposed action for this project.

2.1 PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

As the Airport sponsor, Ravalli County wishes to implement the following improvements to address the identified needs:

- Ultimately construct a new 75-foot wide x 5,200-foot long runway 400 feet east and parallel to the existing runway,
- Shifting the Runway 34 threshold 600 feet to the north,
- Relocating the PAPIs, and install a new medium intensity runway lighting system,
- Convert the existing runway to a parallel taxiway and extend it to the north once the new runway alignment is available for use,
- Construct a new area for aprons and hangars that would not penetrate the Part 77 transitional surface,
- Acquire 132.0 acres of land for runway, apron, taxiway, and hangar development,
- Acquire up to an additional 96.0 acres of land through easement for compatible land use (65 DNL boundary outside of the minimum required land acquisition).

By developing a new runway 400 feet east of the existing runway as shown on the approved Airport Layout Plan (approved 4/20/07), the airport could gain a 230-foot wide apron for the entire front line for tie-down and hangar space. This configuration provides for greater flexibility and efficiency in the possibilities for the parking of aircraft. Implementation of these improvements would open up an additional 44% (156,175 square feet) of future building square footage based on the current hangar configuration. This proposed action provides the greatest flexibility in changing hangar space to apron area or converting apron area to hangar space.
The acquisition of 138.1 acres of land would be required in order to complete all the improvements listed above.

2.2 PROJECTED SCHEDULE AND COSTS

Initial development is projected to be completed between 2009 and 2017. During this time land acquisition, construction of new Runway 16/34 (up to 5,200' in length depending on funding availability) and taxiways, and installation of new runway lighting and Precision Approach Path Indicators (PAPI's) are to be completed. This initial development is estimated to cost $9,184,424.

The remaining development is projected to be completed between 2018 and 2030. During this time apron reconstruction/construction, taxiway reconstruction/construction, animal control fencing, and access road improvements are to be completed. This remaining development is estimated to cost $7,970,829. The estimated total project cost is $17,155,253 to be completed between 2009 and 2030. Appendix V - *Airport Plans and Construction* addresses the schedule of improvements and associated costs in detail.

2.3 PROJECTED BENEFITS

The placement of the new runway 400' east and conversion of the existing runway into the parallel taxiway will provide a safer environment for the type of aircraft now using the airport. This alternative would also permit the airport to remain open during the runway construction period. Maintaining the construction activity separate from active use area of the airport is an important safety issue at a busy non-towered general aviation airport.

This proposed action also shifts the Runway 34 threshold 600' further to the north and away from Tammany Lane. Shifting of the threshold increases the height of aircraft on approach from the south over the neighborhood to the south.

Conclusion: These improvements provide for runway/taxiway separation and runway length for the type of aircraft forecast to use the airport during the next twenty years and for the additional apron and hangar space necessary to accommodate current and future growth. The preferred alternative also takes care of any need in the future to increase the runway-taxiway separation should "C" aircraft become the critical design factor. This benefit would prevent the need to spend substantial funding.

2.4 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MITIGATION

Of the affected environments reviewed for this proposed action, four areas were identified as having moderate (measureable but can be mitigated) impacts; 1) biotic resources (general wildlife), 2) historic and archaeological, 3) noise, and 4) wetlands. Chapter 4 – *Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences and Mitigation* covers these environments in greater detail.

2.4.1 BIOTIC RESOURCES

General wildlife species (i.e. deer, ground-nesting mammals, and birds) may be displaced with the implementation of the proposed improvements. Therefore, impacts resulting from these alternatives were determined to be "moderate" for general wildlife. "Moderate" impacts are defined as those that are measurable, but can be mitigated. Conceptual mitigation includes minimizing impacts to Gird Creek and its associated fringe wetland, the upland areas adjacent to the existing airport development, and where practicable, avoid and minimize damage to and the removal of existing trees within and adjacent to the proposed project areas to maintain adequate desirable habitat for wildlife.

Wildlife/animal control fencing will be installed around the perimeter of the airport in order to discourage (i.e., prevent access) to larger mammal species such as deer, coyote, and domesticated dogs from entering and traversing the airport property. This perimeter fencing will also help to regulate access to the airport property by unauthorized vehicles and persons.

2.4.2 NOISE

All of the alternatives could result in moderate increases to noise levels due to a potential increase in traffic volumes, regardless of whether improvements are made. Therefore, impacts from all of the alternatives were determined to be "moderate" for noise. Conceptual mitigation includes land acquisition of those parcels along the easterly boundary of the airport that would be impacted by noise levels beyond the acceptable threshold limits.

2.4.3 WETLANDS

Based on wetland delineation and jurisdictional determination by the Army Corps of Engineers (COE), it was determined that the proposed improvements could impact up to 1.96 acres of wetlands. The proposed improvements would require securing an individual Clean Water Act Section 404 permit prior to project development. Securing an individual permit would require construction or acquisition of compensatory mitigation (at a ratio established by COE). An evaluation of mitigation alternatives for the project site has concluded that compensatory mitigation is available for the proposed action within the same watershed as the airport. The project will secure compensatory mitigation through one or more means, including the Teller Wildlife Refuge, on County-owned property, or on privately-owned property. Securing compensator mitigation will result in no adverse effect to wetland resources in the area of the airport for the proposed action. Appendix IX – *RCA Wetland Delineation Report* can also be referenced for the wetland delineation of the Ravalli County Airport property.